

however, was firm, and succeeded in having the piece performed. He knew that the Italians judged from feeling, and not from systems of criticism, and trusted to the effect of his music on a sensitive and enthusiastic people. He was not disappointed. Every prejudice was swept away by the very first representation, which was received with acclamations. It was performed twenty-eight times in uninterrupted succession, and the *Armida* of Traceta, who had been engaged at the same time with Gluck, notwithstanding this composer's high and deserved reputation, was not brought forward at all. *Orfeo* was immediately performed, with the most brilliant success, at all the principal theatres in Italy—at Naples, Rome, Venice, Milan, and Bologna. This last city, it is said, was enriched, during a single season, by the receipt of above a hundred thousand sequins, (fifty thousand pounds sterling,) in consequence of the influx of strangers attracted by the fame of *Orfeo*.

None of Gluck's works are more characteristic of his genius, or exemplify more remarkably the peculiarities of his style, than this opera of *Orfeo*. As a dramatic poem, too, it exhibits the talents of Calzabigi in a very favourable light. Its structure is simple in the extreme and the characters very few: but the incidents and situations are admirably calculated for effect and musical expression.

After a short and rather flimsy overture, the first scene

discoverers Orpheus and Eurydice, and surrounded by a company of Thessalian shepherds and shepherdesses, who sympathise with the bereaved husband in his grief, and join in his lamentations. This forms a beautiful and pathetic chorus, interrupted by the broken exclamations of Orpheus. When they have strewn her tomb with flowers, he prays them to leave him in solitude; and when the last strains of the departing chorus have died away, he gives vent to his sorrow in a soliloquy, in which a simple and melancholy air is followed by an impassioned burst of recitative, exquisitely blended with the wailing notes of the oboes. The god of love appears to him, and announces that he has come to the aid of so faithful a votary, and that, as a reward for his truth and constancy, he shall be permitted to descend to the shades, and endeavour so to soften the hearts of the infernal deities by means of his lyre, that they may restore to him his Eurydice; adding the condition, that he is on no account to look upon her. The smooth and flowing accents in which the god conveys his behests are finely contrasted with the exclamations of surprise, gladness, and terror with which Orpheus receives the communication. The deity vanishes, and the lover, in a long scena, expresses his joyful hope and confidence of success. The air contains passages of great compass, and brilliant divisions, which, however, far from being of the unmeaning kind which merely displays the execution of the singer, seem to be full of a rapture which articulate language is unable to express. This highly wrought and splendid air closes the first act.*

In the second act the scene is transported to the banks of the Styx. A brief strain of wild and terrible harmony, from brazen instruments, comes suddenly upon the ear; and a company of fiends burst into an appalling chorus, demanding who is the audacious mortal who has dared to approach their domains. These dismal sounds, uttered in unison, are mingled with the harsh chords of the brass instruments, and fierce dances of infernal spirits. Orpheus appears with his lyre, the prelude notes of which are imitated by the arpeggios of a harp in the orchestra. He addresses the spectres in suppliant accents, and beseeches them to suffer themselves to be moved by his tears, but receives for answer only a terrific monosyllable, "No!" His strains become more and more touching and impassioned; and their effect in softening his dreadful auditory is apparent in the altered expression of the chorus which fills up the intervals between the stanzas he sings. They are at length subdued by his melody, and he is allowed to pass forward, amid the fantastic dances of the infernal crew.

The scene changes to the groves of Elysium, where Eurydice is discovered surrounded by groups of happy spirits. She sings a beautiful *grazioso* air, mingled with the sweet and choral strains of her companions, expressive of the peace and tranquillity of these blissful abodes. A soft instrumental symphony, mingled with passages imitative of the songs of birds, and the murmuring of the breezes of paradise, precedes the entrance of Orpheus, and accompanies his song. He appears delighted and wondering at the objects which surround him. He is welcomed by a company of blessed spirits, whom he implores to bring him to his beloved; and they announce that she is about to be restored to him. "Though she returns to earth," they say, "she will still find Elysium in the arms of so tender a husband." With this chorus, full of the sweetest and most grateful harmony, the second act closes.

The third act opens with the meeting of the reunited pair. Their rapturous emotions are expressed in broken and hurried phrases of recitative. Orpheus calls upon Eurydice to follow him, that they may return to the realms of day. She prepares with transport to comply, but observes with surprise his averted looks. Unable to obtain an explanation, and struck to the heart by the coldness of one who had loved her so well, she abandons herself to grief. Her husband cannot resist her tears, her complaints, and remonstrances; he turns his eyes upon

* This air is not in the original Italian score, but was added when the opera was adapted to the French stage. The act at first terminated with a recitative by Orpheus; but this appearing cold and meagre, Gluck was persuaded to add the air, in order to give brilliancy to the conclusion. Even this would not be satisfactory nowadays, when a full chorus is considered an indispensable termination to an act.

her, and with a cry of agony, she vanishes. This is the great scene of the opera; and, in dramatic power and passionate expression, beautiful melody and fine instrumental effects, it has never been surpassed, if, indeed, it has ever been equalled. Orpheus, thus bereaved, gives way to his despair in a wild tumultuous recitative, and then sinks into the profound grief which breathes in the air, "Che farò senza Eurydice." He resolves, by a voluntary death, to reunite himself to her for ever, and is about to execute his purpose, when his hand is arrested by the god of love, who tells him that love has triumphed, and that his spouse is restored to him. Eurydice appears, and the lovers rush into each other's arms. In the last scene, Orpheus and Eurydice, accompanied by Love, are surrounded by their old companions, who celebrate their happiness by joyous choral songs. A trio of exquisite beauty is sung by Eurydice, Orpheus and Love; and the piece is terminated by a ballet, the last movement of which is danced to a most elegant and graceful *chaconne*.

We have given this slight outline of *Orfeo*, as we believe, with some eminent continental critics, that is the best and purest of Gluck's works, and most strikingly characteristic of his genius. In severe and classical simplicity of construction and style it appears to be unrivalled. It contains only three characters, besides the persons who make the choruses; though it is easy to see, by the preceding account of the share which the choruses have in the action of the drama, that they require very different performers from the singing machines we see ranged on each side of the stage in our opera-house. The part of *Orfeo* was originally composed for the celebrated Guadagni, who exalted his reputation by his performance of it in Germany and England as well as in Italy. It demands histrionic as well as vocal powers of the highest order. The part of *Eurydice*, in a musical point of view, is less prominent, though it requires a very great actress and singer to do justice to the scene in the third act. The character of *Love* is a little part, for which grace and elegance only are requisite.

In order to appreciate the style of Gluck, it is necessary to compare it with that of his predecessors and contemporaries, and then its striking originality, boldness, and disregard of all existing models, are at once perceived. If many of his phrases of melody, and harmonic combinations, are familiar to our ears, it is because they have been so often and so freely borrowed by his successors. The music of Gluck brings Mozart continually into our mind, because Mozart is better known to us than Gluck, whose ideas seem to be the property of his successor, and to have been borrowed by the older composer from the more modern. In thus reminding us of Mozart, too, Gluck's music suffers a disadvantage; for Mozart did not merely adopt his style, but polished and heightened it. The melody of Mozart is not more natural, more expressive, more delicately adapted to every shade of feeling and passion, than that of Gluck; but it is smoother, rounder, more rhythmical—better calculated, in short, for the gratification of the ear. Not that the music of Gluck is wanting in that indispensable requisite, which, on the contrary, it possesses in an eminent degree. But Gluck and every other dramatic composer must yield to Mozart in the power of combining this quality with the higher attributes of truth, nature, and variety of expression. One old composer is frequently brought to mind by the music of Gluck; one, too—so much is the fame of the greatest English musicians confined within our own shores—whose name he probably never heard of—our own Purcell. Their resemblance is often very remarkable, both in their choral harmonies, and in their short and simple airs. Take, for example, the scene already mentioned, the choruses of the infernal spirits, and the soul-subduing strains addressed to them by Orpheus: imagine these associated with English poetry, and we have the very music of Purcell. Nor is it wonderful that this resemblance should exist. If Purcell composed without models, Gluck threw them away. No other composers were so independent of precedent, so little indebted to conventional forms. They both studied in the book of nature: and it is not surprising, that, in both, similar cultivation should have produced similar fruits.

Orfeo was first performed in England in 1770, when the principal character was sustained by Guadagni, its original representative. He produced a great impression by his action, and especially by the impassioned and ex-

quisite manner in which he sang the air, "Che farò senza Eurydice;" but the opera was injured by the very common practice in this country of *improving* it by changes and interpolations. "The unity, simplicity, and dramatic excellence of this opera," says Burney, "which had gained the composer so much credit on the continent, were greatly diminished here by the heterogeneous mixture of music of other composers in a quite different style; whose long symphonies, long divisions, and repetitions of words, occasioned delay and languor in the incidents and action. A drama, which at Venice was rendered so interesting as almost to make the audience think more of the poet than the musician, in England had the fate of all other Italian dramas, which are pronounced good or bad in proportion to the talents and favour of the singers." When it was performed at Naples in 1773, an attempt was made to substitute, in the third act, a duet by another composer for the original; but the audience would not listen to it, and loudly demanded the music of Gluck.

When this opera was afterwards translated into French and adapted to the Parisian stage, it was received with enthusiasm. Rousseau declares that he was so transported with it, that he did not miss a single representation; "for," he said, "if so much exalted pleasure can be enjoyed in the space of two hours, it is sufficient to convince us that life is really good for something." Rousseau's suffrage was the stronger from his being a decided partisan of the Italian school.

The brilliant success of *Orfeo* induced the poet and musician to produce *Alceste*. Its success was equal to that of *Orfeo*. Gluck accompanied its publication with the exposition, which has been already quoted, of the principles, now brought to the test of experience, upon which both of these pieces had been composed. *Alceste* was brought out in 1768; and for two years no other opera was performed at the court theatre of Vienna. Its publication took place in 1769.

The third opera, jointly produced by Calzabigi and Gluck, was *Paride ed Elena*, which was not so successful as the previous pieces had been. It was published, with an epistle dedicatory to the Duke of Parma, in which Gluck complains of his principles not having been adopted by other composers, and defends them against the objections of critics.

"I determined," he says, "to publish the music of *Alceste*, simply in the hope that it might find imitators. I ventured to flatter myself that, in following the path I have opened, composers would have endeavoured to put an end to the abuses introduced into the Italian theatre, and by which it is dishonoured. But I grieve to confess that hitherto my endeavours have been vain. The half learned, the pretenders to taste, unhappily too numerous a class, and in all ages a thousand times more injurious to the progress of the fine arts than those who are entirely ignorant, have combined against a method which, in establishing itself, destroyed their pretensions.

"It was thought that judgment might be pronounced upon *Alceste* after irregular, ill-directed, and worse-executed rehearsals. The effect which this opera would produce in a theatre was calculated in an apartment, with the same sagacity with which some Grecian critics pretended to judge, at the distance of a few feet, of the effect of statues to be placed on lofty columns. One of these nice amateurs, who has transferred his whole soul to his ears, will find an air too hard, a passage too much marked, or not sufficiently prepared, without dreaming that in that particular situation this air and passage are the height of expression, and produce the happiest contrast. A pedantic harmonist will remark an ingenious negligence or a deficiency in strictness, and will hasten to denounce them as unpardonable violations of the mysteries of harmony; and forthwith a crowd of voices will join in condemning the music as rude, barbarous, and extravagant.

"The other arts, indeed, are hardly more fortunate, and your highness may easily divine the reason. The more we are determined to search for perfection and truth, the more necessity there is for precision and exactness. The traits which distinguish a Raphael from the crowd of painters are but slightly perceptible; slight alterations in the contour of a head would not destroy the resemblance, but they would disfigure its beauty. I wish for no other proof of this than my own air in *Orfeo*, 'Che farò senza Eurydice;' make the least change in it, either in the time or the turn of expression, and it

will become an air for a puppet show.* In a work of this kind, a note more or less sustained, increasing the tone or neglecting the time, an appoggiatura out of place, a shake, a passage, a roulade, may mar the effect of a whole scene."

Notwithstanding Gluck's triumphant success, the acquiescence in his principles, and the applause of his practice, were far from being unanimous; and that he felt this strongly is apparent from the tenor of the above passage. When Dr. Burney visited Vienna in 1772, he found party running high among the poets and musicians of that capital, and their adherents; Metastasio and Hasse being at the head of one of the principal sects, and Calzabigi and Gluck leading the other. "The first," says Burney, "regarding all innovations as quackery, adhere to the ancient form of the musical drama, in which the poet and musician claim equal attention from the audience; the bard in the recitatives and narrative parts, and the composer in the airs, duos, and choruses. The second party depend more on theatrical effects, propriety of character, simplicity of diction and of musical execution, than on what they style flowery descriptions, superfluous similes, sententious and cold morality, on one side, with tiresome symphonies and long divisions on the other."

Burney gives an account of a visit he paid to Gluck at this time, through the introduction of a musical lady of rank, the Countess Thun. The composer, then about sixty, was by no means of easy access. "The Countess," Burney says, "had been so kind as to write a note to Gluck on my account, and he had returned, for him, a very civil answer; for he is as formidable a character as Handel used to be; a very dragon, of whom all are in fear. However, he had agreed to be visited in the afternoon; and Lord Stormont and Countess Thun had extended their condescension so far as to promise to carry me to him. At five o'clock Lord Stormont's coach carried us to the house of the Chevalier Gluck, in the Faubourg St. Mark. He is very well housed there; has a pretty garden, and a great number of neat and elegantly furnished rooms. He has no children. Madame Gluck, and his niece, who lives with him, came to receive us at the door, as well as the veteran composer himself. He is much pitted with the small-pox, and very coarse in figure and look, but was soon got into good humour; and he talked, sang, and played, Madame Thun observed, more than she ever knew him to do at any one time.

"He began upon a very bad harpsichord, by accompanying his niece, who is but thirteen years old, in two of the capital scenes of his own famous opera of *Alceste*. She has a powerful and well-toned voice, and sang with infinite taste, feeling, expression, and even execution. After these two scenes from *Alceste*, she sang several others by different composers, and in different styles, particularly by Traetta.

"When she had done, her uncle was prevailed upon to sing himself; and, with as little voice as possible, he continued to entertain and even delight the company in a very high degree; for with the richness of accompaniment, the energy and vehemence of his manner in the *allegros*, and his judicious expression in the slow movements, he so well compensated for the want of voice, that it was a defect which was soon entirely forgotten. He was so good as to perform almost his whole opera of *Alceste*; many admirable things in a still later opera of his, called *Paride ed Elena*, and in a French opera, from Racine's *Iphigenie*, which he has just composed. This last, though he had not as yet committed a note of it to paper, was so well digested in his head, and his retention is so wonderful, that he sang it nearly from the beginning to the end, with as much readiness as if he had had a fair score before him."

"Though Gluck was now a 'veteran composer,' yet he was only about to enter upon the most brilliant and memorable period of his life. The opera of *Iphigenie*, which he had just composed, was written for the French stage. He had conceived the opinion, that whatever might be the vocal superiority of the Italian performers, he might find in the French theatre better actors and greater attention to dramatic propriety and effect than on the Italian stage. In this opinion he was supported by M. du Rollet, a French *litterateur*, then attached to the French embassy at Vienna. In concert with this

gentleman, he got the *Iphigenie* of Racine transformed into an opera; and having composed the music, received, through the means of M. du Rollet, an invitation to Paris, in order that it might be performed there. He arrived in Paris in 1774. From that period his works cease to belong to Germany, as it was to the French theatre that he devoted his talents during the latter years of his life; and these years form a most important period in the history of the French musical drama.

After a stormy residence of five years in France, Gluck, in 1779, returned to Vienna, where he spent the last years of his life in tranquil enjoyment of an ample fortune. He died of apoplexy in 1787, at the age of seventy-three.

During the greatest part of the last century, though the Italian opera had established itself in most of the cities of Germany, the national German opera had scarcely as yet sprung into existence. Not only was this the case at Vienna, but in every other part of that great country. In all the musical theatres nothing was heard but Italian operas, composed, for the most part, by Italian musicians, and performed by Italian singers. Dr. Burney, during the whole of his tour, undertaken in 1772, for the purpose of enquiring into the state of music in Germany, does not appear to have heard a single German opera. When he was at Mannheim, Gretry's French opera of *Zemire et Azor* was performed in a German translation, and by German singers, of whom he speaks favourably. "The girl," he says, "who played the part of *Zemire* had not a great voice, but her manner of singing was natural and pleasing. She had a good shake, and never forced her voice, or sang out of tune; there were two of the men who had reasonable good voices, and whose *portamento* and expression would not have offended such as had been long conversant with the best singing of Italy."—"Upon the whole," he adds, "I was more pleased with this singing than with any which I had heard since my arrival on the continent. Indeed the Germans are now so forward in music, and have so many excellent composers of their own country, that it is a matter of astonishment to me that they do not get original dramas for music written in their own language, and set by the natives: or, if they must have translations, that they do not get those translations new set." He says, indeed, that Mr. Hiller, of Leipsic, had furnished his countrymen with a number of comic operas; but this composer is mentioned as a singular, and indeed solitary instance of a German musician occupying himself with the national opera of his own country.

Beside Vienna, the principal seats of the Italian opera in Germany were Dresden, Munich, and Berlin. In 1719 the Italian company at Dresden was so distinguished, that Handel went thither to engage singers for the Italian opera of London. In 1754, the orchestra of the Dresden theatre, under the direction of Hasse, was celebrated as the most complete and best disciplined in Europe. Rousseau gives a particular account of it in his *Dictionnaire de Musique*. It was from the dispersion of this famous band, at the beginning of the seven years' war, that almost every great city of Europe, and London among the rest, acquired several of their most exquisite and favourite instrumental performers. When Burney visited Germany, some of the members of the Electoral family of Saxony possessed the attainments of first-rate musicians. The Electress Dowager had composed two Italian operas, *Talestri* and *Il Trionfo della Fedeltà*, which had been published, and performed with general admiration all over Germany. Burney was present at a concert at Munich, where this princess sang a scene in her own opera of *Talestri*, accompanied by Naumann on the pianoforte, and her brother the Elector of Bavaria on the violin. "She sang," says Burney, "in a truly fine style. Her voice is very weak, but she never forces it, or sings out of tune. She spoke the recitative, which was an accompanied one, very well, in the way of great old singers of better times. She had been a long while a scholar of Porpora, who lived many years at Dresden, in the service of her father-in-law, Augustus, King of Poland. This recitative was as well written as it was well expressed: the air was an *andante* rich in harmony, somewhat in the way of Handel's best opera songs in that time." As a performer on the viola-gamba, Burney found the elector worthy of being compared to the celebrated Abel. At this time Dresden, in consequence of the calamities of war, had fallen from its former musical greatness. The magnificent theatre,

once the scene of so much splendour, was shut up; and the only musical entertainment was an Italian opera *buffa*, poorly performed in a small theatre.

The Italian opera flourished at Berlin at the beginning of the last century. The cultivation of music, as well as every other elegant art, was suspended in Prussia during the iron reign of Frederick the First. His celebrated successor, who, notwithstanding the stern prohibition of his father, had clandestinely indulged his love of literature and the fine arts, patronised and encouraged them on his accession to the throne. For music he had a peculiar predilection; and, under the tuition of the celebrated Quantz, not only acquired great knowledge of the art, but became a first-rate performer on the flute—an accomplishment which he continued to exercise till the latest period of his life.

During the reign of this royal amateur the Italian opera was supported at Berlin on a magnificent scale, and its direction was the favourite pastime by which he relieved his mind from the cares of state and the anxieties of war. When Burney was at Berlin in 1772, the opera company contained several eminent singers, the orchestra consisted of fifty performers, there was a large chorus, and a numerous ballet. The king being at the whole expense of the establishment, the entrance was gratuitous, and any one who was decently dressed might have admission into the pit. The king always stationed himself in the pit, standing behind the conductor, so as to have a view of the score. In this position he himself assumed the office of conductor, drilling his musical troops with the strictness of a military martinet. If any mistake was committed on the stage or in the orchestra, he marked the offender and rebuked him on the spot; and if any of the singers ventured to alter a single passage in his part, he was ordered, at his peril, to adhere strictly to the notes written by the composer. His majesty was equally despot in the pit of his theatre as at the head of his army; and it may be supposed that such severity, whatever correctness it may have produced, must have completely checked the feelings and fancy of the performers.

Frederick's favourite dramatic composers were Hasse, Graun, and Agricola; natives of Germany, but composers of the Italian school. Hasse was celebrated throughout Europe. Graun was one of the greatest of the German ecclesiastical musicians; but the fame of his theatrical compositions seems to have been limited to Berlin. Between 1742 and 1756 he composed a great number of Italian operas for the Berlin theatre, and died there in 1759. Agricola was a pupil of Sebastian Bach, and a great organist. His Italian operas, like those of Graun, were confined to Berlin. He died in 1774.

It was as a member of the king of Prussia's operatic corps that the unrivalled Mara first appeared as a singer of acknowledged reputation. She was born at Cassel in 1749, and was the only child of Johan Schmaling, a musician of that town, who earned his livelihood partly by repairing musical instruments. When a mere infant she showed such an aptitude for learning to play on the violin, that her father gave her some lessons, and she almost immediately played beautifully. Her extraordinary proficiency became known, and her father's house was crowded with curious visitors. She was invited to the houses of the respectable inhabitants, and was frequently seen carried in her father's arms through the streets, with her little violin in her hand. He took her to Frankfurt and other places, and, in 1759, brought her to London, when she was ten years old. She played duets with him in public, and excited great attention; but she quitted the violin, and betook herself to singing, by the advice of some English ladies who patronised her, but had a dislike to a female fiddler. To her early practice of this instrument, however, she herself used to ascribe her wonderful justness of intonation and facility in taking all sorts of intervals, however unusual and difficult.*

"In a conversation," says Mr. Bacon, in his *Elements of Vocal Science*, "that I lately had with Madame Mara, she assured me that, had she a daughter, she should learn the fiddle before she sang a note." "For," said Madame Mara, "how can you best convey a just notion of slight variations in the pitch of a note? By a fixed instrument! No. By the voice! No. But, by sliding the finger upon the string, you instantly make the most minute variation visibly as well as audibly perceptible." She received lessons in singing from Paradisi, an Italian

* We would recommend this remark to the fair vocalists who sing this beautiful air.

On returning to Cassel, M. Schmalzing endeavoured to get a situation for his child in the service of the King of Prussia. She was now grown up, and had been received with the utmost admiration by her town's people. Frederick sent his first singer, Morelli, to hear her, and report upon her merits. The report was what might be expected from national jealousy. "She sings like a German," said Morelli; and the king, whose opinion of German singing was, naturally enough at that time, very low, paid no further attention to the application in her favour. After this disappointment her father took her to Leipzig, where her performance at a concert made such an impression, that she immediately received an engagement as first singer at the little German theatre already mentioned, under the management of M. Hiller, with a salary of about £80 a year. At this period she applied herself to the harpsichord, on which she became so great a proficient that she played several concertos in public.

While residing at Leipzig, she attracted the notice of the Duchess Dowager of Saxony, who gave her an invitation to Dresden, where her first appearance at the opera was received with enthusiastic applause. Her increase of reputation encouraged her father to hope that she might yet succeed at Berlin, and they repaired thither in 1771. The king, at first, could hardly be persuaded to hear her. "A German singer!" he exclaimed, "I should as soon expect to receive pleasure from the neighing of my horse. Curiosity to hear this extraordinary German singer, however, at length prevailed. Mademoiselle Schmalzing was sent for to Potsdam, where the king received her in his private room. Her spirit (of which she always possessed an ample share) had been roused by the king's sarcasm, which had been repeated to her against German singing, and she entered the royal apartment with the coolness which sprang from wounded pride. The king, who was sitting by the pianoforte, looked at her steadily; but, as he said nothing, and did not, even by a gesture, invite her to approach, she turned aside, and began to look at the pictures which hung near her. At last, seeing the king beckon to her, she made her obeisance, and stepped forward. "So you are going to sing me something?" said the king, abruptly. "As your majesty pleases," said the young singer, as she sat down quietly to the instrument. The king listened attentively, and, when she had finished the air, expressed great satisfaction. He then asked if she could sing at night, placing before her a very difficult bravura song, which she sang with perfect correctness. He was delighted, paid her many compliments, dismissed her with a handsome present, and made her the *prima donna* of the opera.

Mademoiselle Schmalzing was in this situation when Dr. Burney was at Berlin. She was then three-and-twenty, and in high favour at the court. Burney thus describes his first visit to her: "Mademoiselle Schmalzing received me very politely and unaffectedly. She is short, and not handsome, but is far from having any thing disagreeable in her countenance; on the contrary, there is a strong expression of good-humour impressed upon it, which renders her address very engaging. Her teeth are irregular, and project too much; yet altogether, her youth and smiles taken into the account, she is rather agreeable in face and figure." I found that she had preserved her English; indeed she sometimes wanted words, but, having learned it very young, the pronunciation of those which occurred was perfectly correct. She was so obliging as to sing, at my request, very soon after my entrance. She began with a very difficult *aria di bravura*, by Traetta, which I had heard before at Minigotti's. She sang it admirably, and fully answered the great ideas I had formed of her abilities, in every thing but her voice, which was a little cloudy, and not quite so powerful as I expected. However, she had a slight cold and cough, and complained of indisposition: but with all this her voice was sweetly toned, and she sang

master of some reputation; but these instructions were continued for a very short time, and she does not appear to have afterwards had any other teacher.

* This portrait of the youthful Schmalzing recalls the appearance of Madame Mara to those who remember her in England. Her features were plain, almost to ugliness; but her countenance was yet striking and interesting, from the genius and sensibility by which it was animated.

perfectly well in tune. She was an excellent shaker, a good expression, and a facility of executing and articulating rapid and difficult divisions, that is astonishing. Her second song was a *largo*, by Schwanenburg, of Brunswick, which was very pretty in itself; but she made it truly delightful by her taste and expression. She was by no means lavish of graces, but those she used were perfectly suited to the style of the music and idea of the part. After this she sang an *andante*, in the part which she had to practise for the ensuing carnival, in Graun's *Merops*; and in this she acquitted herself with great taste, expression, and propriety. "At the house of Mademoiselle Schmalzing," Burney afterwards says, "I heard this morning M. Mara execute, with great ability, several pieces on the violoncello. He is a young man, and the son of a performer of the same name and upon the same instrument, whose talents have been much celebrated in Germany." This man had come to Berlin a short time before, and had been engaged as a performer at the king's concerts. An intimacy took place between him and Mademoiselle Schmalzing; and although the king, who was aware of Mara's dissipated and vicious character, warned his young protégée against the imprudence of uniting herself with such a man, she disregarded the caution, and soon afterwards became his wife.

After remaining about seven years at Berlin, Madame Mara received an invitation to visit London, upon very advantageous terms. The offer was not to be slighted; but the difficulty was, to obtain the consent of her patron, or rather master, the king of Prussia. On being applied to, his majesty's answer was, "Madame Mara may go if she will, but M. Mara must stay where he is." The king thought that this would prevent her journey, as she was much attached to her husband. But, to the husband, the English guineas were more attractive than his wife's society; and, at his desire, she was about to set out in company with a female relative, when the king again interposed and prohibited her departure. Finding themselves thus despotically treated, Mara and his wife resolved to make their escape; and, with considerable difficulty and apprehension, got beyond the bounds of the Prussian territory, and traveled with the utmost expedition to Vienna, where they arrived in March 1780. The moment the Prussian despot was aware of their escape, he despatched a messenger to the Emperor Joseph the Second, desiring him to arrest the fugitives. The emperor, however, good-naturedly condescended to give them a hint, that there was no resisting the king of Prussia, and that they had better get away as fast as possible, so that he might inform the king that his messenger had arrived too late. When the alarm was over, Mara appeared publicly in Vienna, where she remained nearly two years; and where, notwithstanding the cabals of the Italian singers, she was received, both by the court and the public, with the greatest enthusiasm. She next went to Paris, where at first she found a rival in the celebrated Todi; but she soon rose to a level with, and afterwards surpassed her competitor. She now received another offer of an engagement in London, which she accepted, and arrived in this country in 1784. Her long residence in England, which formed the most brilliant part of her career, and the subsequent circumstances of her life, shall be afterwards noticed.

Besides those who have been mentioned, several other German dramatic composers flourished about the middle of the last century: but they were Italians, in so far as regards education and style. The most eminent among them were John Christian Beach, Naumann, and Mesliwack.

John Christian Bach was a son of the illustrious John Sebastian Bach. Having, at an early age, lost his father, he went to Italy, devoted himself to the study of vocal music, and soon distinguished himself as a vocal composer. In 1763 he came to this country, and resided almost constantly in London till his death in 1782. He composed many successful Italian operas for our stage; and many of his airs continued in favour long after the operas to which they belonged were laid aside. Some of them, indeed, are not yet forgotten. They are simple, natural, and elegant; and bear evident marks of the Neapolitan school, in which he studied.

Johann Gottlieb Naumann was a native of Saxony, and born of very poor parents. When very young, his passion for music induced him to travel into Italy, where, after enduring great hardships and difficulties, he had the good fortune to attract the notice of the cele-

brated Tarini, who not only gave him instructions, but obtained for him the means of studying in the best schools of Italy. After a residence of several years in Italy, he returned to his native country, and was appointed *Maestro di Capella* to the elector of Saxony. He died at Dresden in 1801. Naumann's works are voluminous both for the church and the theatre. Some of his opera songs are still performed at concerts.

Joseph Mielwiczek was a Bohemian. In his youth he studied at Venice under Pescetti, and spent his life chiefly in Italy. From about 1760 to 1780 he composed many Italian operas which acquired considerable celebrity both in Italy and Germany. In his latter days he appears to have outlived his good fortune, or perhaps his faculties; for, after producing several unsuccessful works, he died in great poverty in 1781 or 1782.

Haydn composed a good many Italian operas, but they seem never to have traveled beyond the private theatre of his patron Prince Esterhazy, and the most of them were destroyed by an accidental fire in the palace of that prince.

It thus appears that, down to the period at which we are arrived, the Germans had not a national musical drama, and can hardly be said to have had a national dramatic musician. The German theatrical composers not only devoted themselves exclusively to the Italian opera, but had been educated in the Italian school, and wrote in the Italian style; with the exception, however, of Gluck; for though this great man's operas are Italian or French in form, they are essentially German in spirit and character. Gluck, therefore, may be designated as the father of the German musical drama.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Mozart.

Gluck's successor, as a German dramatic musician, was the unrivaled Mozart. The greatest part of his theatrical works were Italian operas, and his earlier pieces belonged entirely to the Italian school: but, even in his Italian operas, his style became more and more German; and he was the first who produced a great dramatic work in the German language and for the German stage.

During his precocious childhood, Mozart, among his other musical attainments, became well acquainted with the Italian vocal music of the time. A curious instance of his familiarity with the Italian school was exhibited during his stay in England, when he was about eight years old, and is recorded by the honourable Daines Barrington. In one of his visits to the youthful musician, Mr. Barrington asked him to sing an *ex tempore* love song, in the manner of the celebrated singer Manzoni, who was then in England. Mozart immediately began a recitative in the Italian style, and then sang, on the single word "*affetto*," an *amoroso* air, which had a first and second part, and was of the ordinary length, and on the model, in other respects, of an Italian opera song. Mr. Barrington then asked him to sing an air expressive of rage, in the style of the *opera seria*. He immediately began a proper recitative, and then sang an air on the word "*perfidio*." Before he finished, he became so excited that, instead of playing, he beat the keys of the harpsichord, and sometimes started from his seat as if under the influence of the passions he was expressing. When he returned home to Salzburg, and applied himself ardently to his musical studies, he is said to have taken, as his principal guides in vocal composition, the operas of Hasse, Leo, Vinci, Porpora, and other old Italian masters.

In the year 1768, when he was twelve years old, Mozart, by order of the Emperor Joseph the Second, composed an Italian comic opera called *La Finta Semplice*. It received the approbation of Hasse and Metastasio, who were then at Vienna; but in consequence, it is said, of a cabal among the singers, it was not performed. In the following year he went to Italy, where he was received with enthusiasm, and composed several Italian operas which were performed at Milan and other places with the greatest success; a proof of the command he had at that early age acquired of the style of dramatic composition then popular in Italy. Of these early Italian operas the names are all that survive. They were, *Mithridate*, *Lucio Silla*, *Ascanio in Alba*, *Il Sogno di Scipione*, and *La Finta Giardiniera*;—all composed

before he was seventeen; an age at which it would be vain to expect music flowing from the heart as the language of passions and sentiments not yet developed in the youthful mind. At that age, even in the most highly gifted, the expression of deep feeling and strong emotion must be in a great measure conventional and borrowed: and it may therefore be presumed that the world has lost little in the oblivion of these juvenile operas, graceful and elegant as they most doubtless have been.

The first opera on which Mozart's celebrity is founded was composed under the powerful incitements of love and ambition. He had laboured, strenuously and successfully, to gain honour and distinction, but had been sorely disappointed in his prospects of solid advantage from his talents. In the capital of France, as well as several places in his own country, he had met with neglect from the great, and malevolence from jealous rivals, and had returned, sickened and disheartened, to his native Salzburg, when his sovereign, the archbishop of that city, called him to Vienna. In the Austrian capital his prospects brightened, and a new charm was given to his existence by the society of an amiable girl, Constance Weber, a favourite young actress. He became passionately enamoured of her, and she returned his love; but her parents would not consent to their union on account of his want of a settled situation in life. At this time the Elector of Bavaria, who had already shown him distinguished favour, desired him to write an opera for the elector's theatre at Munich, which was then maintained in a style of great splendour. Mozart was now five and twenty, in the full strength and vigour of his genius. He saw before him the means of achieving an honourable independence, and of gaining the object of his affection; and, with a heart burning with love and hope, he rapidly composed his *Idomeneo*;—a piece which he always fondly regarded as the best of his works, and which certainly yields to none of them in tender and passionate expression.

The success of *Idomeneo* crowned the wishes of the young composer. It raised him to an eminence which removed the scruples of his mistress's family, and brought about the happiest event of his life, his marriage with Constance Weber.

The title of this opera is, "*Idomeneo Rè di Creta, o sia Ilia e Idamante; Drama Erioco.*" The scene is laid in the island of Crete. Idomeneus, returning from the Trojan war, is shipwrecked, and his fleet dispersed, by a tempest raised by the anger of Neptune. His son Idamante, with Ilia, the daughter of Priam, (whose life he has saved in the storm,) and a number of Trojan captives, arrive in safety at home; but it is believed that Idomeneus has perished. A mutual passion has sprung up between the Trojan princess and her deliverer, and at the beginning of the piece Idamante declares his love, and, in token of it, gives the Trojan prisoners their freedom. Idomeneus, with his ships, is driven upon the shore of Crete, having made a vow, as a propitiation, to sacrifice to Neptune the first person he should meet upon his landing. Idamante hastens to the port to greet his father, who perceives, with horror, that his son is the destined victim. Unable to consummate the shocking sacrifice, he resolves to send his son to some distant land, hoping to find some other way of appeasing the offended deity. He therefore orders his son to convey Electra, the daughter of Agamemnon (who had been residing at his court) to Argos, her native country. Electra (who nourishes an unrequited passion for the prince, mingled with jealousy and hatred of her rival) is full of joy at the prospect of departing with him, while the lovers are in despair at their separation. All is prepared for the departure of Idamante and Electra; but, as they are about to embark, a storm arises, and a dreadful monster issues from the angry waves, spreading dismay and death among the people. The king and his family have retired into the interior of the palace, the prince remaining in ignorance of the cause of these horrors, when a great body of the people enter, with the chief priest of Neptune at their head, who calls upon the king to look upon the ravages of a monster sent by the angry god, and to appease him by offering up the victim whom he demands. Idomeneus, thus adjured, proclaims his fatal vow, and declares Idamante to be the victim. While the people are expressing, in smothered accents, their grief and astonishment, joyful cries are suddenly heard without. The prince has attacked and slain the monster,

and now rushes in, to offer himself up a willing sacrifice for his country. Idomeneus is about to strike the blow, when the Trojan princess interposes, and wishes to sacrifice herself for her lover, by insisting that she, and not he, is the victim that would be most acceptable to the deity. While this contest is going on, a subterranean noise is heard; the statue of Neptune moves; and an awful voice from heaven declares that Love has conquered—that Idomeneus is pardoned, but that he shall cease to be king, and Idamante, with Ilia as his queen, shall reign in his stead. This *dénouement* produces the effects which may be expected on the different personages; and the piece ends with a choral strain of general joy.

This story has given room for many tragic and impassioned scenes, which are beautifully treated by the composer. He adhered, however, pretty closely to the forms of the Italian opera which were still prevalent at the time, though they were soon abandoned by himself, and became obsolete. The dialogue of the drama is carried on in recitative, mingled with air. Each of the characters has more than one *scena*, consisting of an accompanied recitative and an air: there is but one duet, one trio, and one quartet, and there are several choruses. But during all these the business of the piece stands still: there are none of those concerted pieces in which the dialogue and action are carried on, as in the modern opera. *Idamante*, the hero, is a *mezzo soprano*, a kind of voice now belonging entirely to female parts; *Idomeneo*, *Arbace*, (his confidant,) and even the priest of Neptune, are tenors, and there is no bass at all among the *dramatis personæ*. The airs are on a very extended scale; and, though free from the exploded formality of the *da capo*, yet they contain a great many of the long divisions, passages, and closes, which were fashionable in the Italian music of the time. These are mingled with the beautiful emanations of the author's genius—exquisite modulations, and innumerable traits of tenderness, energy, and passion; and the airs, with their charming accompaniments, cannot be listened to without delight. But they are not sufficiently dramatic. Their great length brings the action of the drama to a stand as often as they occur, while their artificial structure, and the elaborate style of singing which they require, render their performance a musical exhibition, rather than the expression of the feelings and passions of a dramatic personage. During the performance of one of these airs, the audience must necessarily forget the character, and see and hear nothing but the singer; and the necessary effect of the frequent recurrence of such scenes is to deprive the dramatic action of warmth, rapidity, and interest. When Mozart composed this opera, he appears not yet to have studied the works of Gluck, the influence of which is so apparent in the style of his subsequent compositions.

The great features of this opera are the choruses, which are full of beauty and power; and their effect is heightened by the dramatic propriety with which they are introduced. In the first act, when the storm arises which drives Idomeneus on the Cretan strand, the people, divided into groups, upon the stage and at a distance, supplicate the mercy of the gods in the beautiful double chorus for tenor and bass voices, "*Pieta, Numi, pietà!*" while the raging of the tempest is imitated by the wild bursts and chromatic wailing of the orchestra. The finale to this act consists of a brilliant chorus of rejoicing, and thanksgiving to Neptune, for the safety of Idomeneus. In the second act, when Idamante and Electra are about to embark for Argos, the people and mariners sing the celebrated chorus, "*Placido è il mar, andiamo!*" the tranquil sweetness of which forms a fine musical picture of the scene. It is followed by the trio, "*Pria di partir, o Dio!*" in which Idamante and Electra take farewell of the king. At its close, and as they are departing, the orchestra begins to paint the rising storm; sounds of dismay are heard from the people; the war of the elements rages with increasing violence; the howling of the tempest is mingled with screams of terror; the sea-monster appears, and the multitude fly in confusion, their cries becoming fainter and fainter till they are lost in the distance. We know of no instance in which the descriptive powers of music are more strikingly displayed than in this magnificent finale. In the third act, when Idomeneus declares his fatal vow to the chief priest and the people, they give expression to their grief and horror in the chorus, "*O voto tremendo!*" accompanied

by the stringed instruments, *con sordidi*, and the long melancholy notes of the horns, oboes, and bassoons. The effect of this chorus, and of the low and mournful march, while the people slowly depart, is deeply impressive.* The general finale, "*Scenda, amor,*" is simple, resonant, and joyous.

In the instrumentation of this opera the genius of Mozart appears in all its lustre. In some of his subsequent pieces the score is fuller, but it may be doubted whether, in any of them, it is more beautiful, more varied, or more effective. The combination most generally used is that of the quartet of stringed instruments with two horns and two oboes: the flutes are frequently employed; the clarionets very rarely, but, when they do occur, with great effect.† Drums and trumpets are introduced only in the strong parts of the choruses, and in some passages, of peculiar energy, in the part of Idomeneo. A charming effect is produced in *Ilia's* air, "*Se il padre perdei,*" by using one horn, one flute, one oboe, and one bassoon, along with the stringed quartet; these wind instruments having florid *obbligato* passages. One or two airs, of a *parlante* character, are accompanied by the stringed instruments only. The awful voice, which declares the will of Neptune, is accompanied by trombones and horns, like the words of the statue in *Don Giovanni*. The score of *Idomeneo* remains to this day a model in orchestral writing, and is one of the most valuable studies that can be placed in the hands of a young composer.

Idomeneo, with all its beauties, has not kept its place on the stage. It has never, we believe, been performed in England, and it seems to have been laid aside in Germany. This has arisen from the circumstances already mentioned—the adherence to the antiquated forms of the Italian opera, the introduction of the *soprano* voice in a principal male part, and the action being interrupted and retarded by long undramatic airs, instead of being rapidly carried forward by means of concerted scenes. In consequence of these things, it would be cold and heavy on the stage, notwithstanding the energy of the recitatives, the richness and descriptive character of the choruses, and the extreme beauty of the orchestral accompaniments.

In 1781, about two years after *Idomeneo*, Mozart produced his comic opera, *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, or, *The Escape from the Seraglio*; the oldest German opera, we believe, which still lives as an acting piece. As a drama, it is of very slight construction, and the story, though made up of commonplace materials, is absurdly improbable. Belmont and Constance are a young couple betrothed to each other. The lady, in her voyage to Sicily to be married to her lover, is taken by an Algerine corsair, sold to a Turkish pasha, and conveyed to his seraglio, along with her attendant Blonda, and Pedrillo, a servant of her lover's. Pedrillo contrives to convey to his master the tidings of their mistress; and Belmont, determined to attempt his mistress's rescue, arrives in disguise at the pasha's palace, and finds means to get into his service. He endeavours, with the help of Pedrillo, to carry off Constance and Blonda from the seraglio, but they fail, and their affairs assume an uncomfortable aspect, as the pasha is deeply enamoured of the damsel: but, by certain discoveries which take place only in an opera, it appears that the Turkish dignitary and the Christian lady are brother and sister, the pasha, in his infancy, having been carried off by corsairs. Of course every thing ends *à l'aimable*, and the lovers are united. There is an underplot composed of the loves of Pedrillo and Blonda, and the rivalry of Osmin, a ridiculous old Turk, who is smitten with the waiting-woman.

There is a great deal of beauty, but not much *vi comica*, in the music of this opera. Some of the airs are written in that concise and terse style which he afterwards adopted; but the greater number of them, though much more original in their phraseology than those of

* This chorus, and the chorus "*Placido è il mar,*" from their extreme beauty, are often performed at our concerts. But the great error is committed of calling "*O voto tremendo!*" a quartet, and having it sung by solo voices; thus marring the design of the composer, and losing the effect of the music, which expresses, in accents "not loud but deep," the intense but smothered feelings of a great multitude of people.

† In the chorus "*Placido è il mar,*" he employs the *B natural* clarinet, an instrument scarcely ever used.

Idomeneo, are very diffuse, and filled with long *roulades*, flights to the very extremities of the scale, and extravagant difficulties of execution. This is the case with the airs for all the characters, not even excepting Osmín, the old Turk, whose bass voice is tasked almost as heavily as the others. The German singers at Vienna, for whom this opera was written, must have possessed extraordinary vocal powers. Some of the most prominent songs in the piece, indeed, are almost entirely made up of passages of execution; and as these are the passages which give way most quickly to the influence of fashion, the most perfect execution, at the present day, could not prevent them from appearing dry, stiff, and antiquated. Some of the concerted pieces, however, are admirable, and truly dramatic; particularly the quartet in the second act, "Ach, Belmonte!" where the two pairs of lovers meet for the first time within the walls of the *seraglio*. The tender rapture of Belmont and Constance, and the comic light-heartedness of the humbler pair, are blended together with a charming yet very lively effect. The chorus of the pasha's attendants, "Singt dem grossen Bassa lieder," (sing the mighty pasha's praise,) is fine; and the chorus of janissaries, which concludes the opera, is full of barbaric splendour.

This opera was received by the public with great applause; but it did not escape the criticism of the Emperor Joseph the Second. At one of the rehearsals, this royal *dilettante* said to the composer, "My dear Mozart, this is too fine for our ears; there are too many notes;" "I beg your majesty's pardon," said Mozart, with spirit, "there are no more than there ought to be." The emperor made no reply; and, when the piece came to be performed, joined warmly in the general applause. But Mozart, though not disposed at the time to submit to this criticism, afterwards acknowledged its justice. After playing over one of the airs which had received the greatest applause, he remarked that it was very well for a room, but too verbose for the theatre. "When I composed this opera," he added, "I took delight in what I was doing, and never thought any thing too long." This delight in the act of composition is perhaps one of the things which ought to be most carefully guarded against; for the diffuseness to which it is apt to lead may effectually prevent the world from sympathising with it.

The *Entführung aus dem Serail* is still occasionally performed in Germany, though it has been seldom heard in any other country. In 1827 an English version of it was brought out at Covent Garden by the late Mr. Kramer, the able master of his majesty's band, under the title of *The Seraglio*. But so many liberties were taken both with the drama and the music—so many retrenchments, interpolations, and changes of various kinds—that it could hardly be considered the same piece. It had a short run, but was soon laid aside, and has not again been brought forward.

Le Nozze di Figaro appeared in 1786. Beaumarchais' celebrated comedy, *Le Mariage de Figaro*, had attracted extraordinary attention all over Europe; and the Emperor Joseph, it is said, desired that it might be made the foundation of a comic opera, of which the music should be composed by Mozart. The Italian piece, accordingly, was written by Da Ponte, then the poet of the court theatre at Vienna, a man of considerable talent and eccentric character, who died a few years ago, at the age of upwards of eighty, at New York, where he was a teacher of languages. He executed his task very ably; preserving, without obscurity, all the details of the ingenious and complicated Spanish plot, a good deal of the distinctive features of the different characters, and the point and lightness of the dialogue. The following interesting particulars respecting the first appearance of this opera are given by the late Michael Kelly, then a young performer on the Vienna opera stage, and receiving from Mozart much kindness and assistance in the pursuit of his profession.

"Of all the performers," says Kelly,* "in this opera at that time, but one survives—myself. It was allowed that never was an opera more strongly cast. I have seen it performed at different periods in other countries, and well too, but no more to compare with its original performance than light is to darkness. All the original performers had the advantages of the instruction of the composer, who transfused into their minds his inspired

* Reminiscences of Michael Kelly, 1825.